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SPECIAL.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY.****SUGGESTIONS ON POULTRY RAISING FOR THE SOUTHERN FARMER.**

PREPARED IN THE BUREAU OF ANIMAL INDUSTRY.

The southern farmer, by virtue of his location and climate, is splendidly situated for the production of fowls and eggs. The mild winters and early springs make the production of eggs an easy matter when prices are high.

On many farms throughout the country the money derived from the sale of poultry and eggs buys the groceries and clothing for the entire family. Every southern farmer can do as well, and should aim to keep at least 50 hens for laying purposes and home consumption. Select some of the American breeds, such as the Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, or the Rhode Island Reds. The Orpingtons are also a good general-purpose breed.

HOUSING THE POULTRY.

On almost any farm there can be fitted up, with very little, if any, cost for new material, a poultry house that will answer all the purposes of more expensive buildings for keeping poultry. The essentials to success in housing are fresh air, sunshine, a dry floor, and a building that is free from drafts. The house must be free from drafts or the birds will catch cold. Colds are forerunners of roup and other diseases.

FEEDING THE FLOCK.

It takes a healthy, well-fed flock to produce eggs. Fowls must not be allowed to become too fat, as but few eggs will be laid by hens in such condition. To prevent their getting overfat, it is best to make them work for most of their feed by scratching in a litter composed of about 4 inches of dry straw, leaves, or chaff. The following rations will give good results when proper care is given to their feeding:

GRAINS.**MASH.**

1 pound oats-----	} and	{	2 pounds corn meal.
2 pounds corn-----			1 pound rice bran or wheat bran.
			1 pound cottonseed meal.
1 pound oats-----	} and	{	2 pounds corn meal.
2 pounds corn, kafir corn, or milo maize-----			2 pounds rice bran.
1 pound broken rice or peanuts-----			1 pound cottonseed meal.
1 pound oats-----	} and	{	2 pounds wheat bran.
1 pound wheat or barley-----			2 pounds wheat middlings.
1 pound corn or kafir corn-----			2 pounds corn meal or corn chop.
			1½ pounds cottonseed meal.

NOTE.—Intended for farmers in the cotton belt who desire to diversify their farming because of the economic crisis which adversely affects the cotton crop at this time.

Ten per cent or less of beef scrap may be added to the mash in all of the rations with good results. Skim milk or buttermilk is excellent for poultry. Green feeds, such as cabbages, mangel beets, alfalfa, or clover, should be added to these rations when grass is not available.

HOW TO SET A HEN, AND HER CARE WHILE SITTING.

When it is noted that a hen sits on the nest for two or three nights in succession, she is ready to be transferred to a nest, which should be prepared for her beforehand. This nest should be in a box and composed of straw, hay, or chaff for nesting material. Dust the hen thoroughly with insect powder each week while she is sitting. In applying the powder hold the hen by the feet, head down, working the powder well into the feathers, giving special attention to regions around the vent and under the wings. The powder should also be sprinkled in the nest. The nest should be in some quiet, out-of-the-way place on the farm, where the sitting hen will not be disturbed. Move her from the regular laying nest at night. Put a china egg or two in the nest where she is to sit and place a board over the opening so that she can not get off. Toward evening of the second day leave some feed and water and let the hen come off the nest when she is ready. Should she return to the nest after feeding, remove the china egg or eggs and put under her those that are to be incubated. In cool weather it is best to put not more than 10 eggs under a hen, while later in the spring one can put 12 to 15, according to the size of the hen. If eggs become broken while the hen is sitting, replace the nest with new, clean material, and wash the eggs in lukewarm water so as to remove all broken-egg material from them.

TESTING THE EGGS.

Many eggs that are laid are infertile. For this reason it is advisable to set several hens at the same time. After the eggs have been under the hen for seven days they should be tested to see whether they are fertile or infertile. Infertile eggs should be removed and used at home in cooking or for omelets, and the fertile eggs should be put back under the hen. In this way it is often possible to put all the eggs that three hens originally started to sit on under two hens and reset the other hen again. A good homemade egg tester or candler can be made from a large shoe box, or any box that is large enough to go over a lamp, by removing an end and cutting a hole a little larger than the size of a quarter in the bottom of the box, so that when it is set over a common kerosene lamp the hole in the bottom will be opposite the blaze. A hole the size of a silver dollar should be cut in the top of the box to allow the heat to escape. An infertile egg, when held before the small hole with a lamp lighted inside the box, will look perfectly clear, the same as a fresh one, while a fertile egg will show a small dark spot, known as the embryo, with a mass of little blood veins extending in all directions if the embryo is living. The testing should be done in a dark room.

CARE OF THE HEN AND CHICKS.

If the eggs hatch unevenly, those which are slow in hatching may be placed under other hens, as hens often get restless after a part of the chickens are out, allowing the remaining eggs to become cooled

at the very time when steady heat is necessary. Hens should be fed as soon as possible after the eggs are hatched, as feeding tends to keep them quiet; otherwise many hens will leave the nest. In most cases it is best that the hen remain on the nest and brood the chickens for at least 24 hours after the hatching is over. Chickens hatched during the winter should be brooded in a poultry house or shed while the outside weather conditions are unfavorable; after the weather becomes settled, they should be reared in brood coops out of doors. Brood coops should be made so that they can be closed at night to keep out cats, rats, and other animals, and enough ventilation should be allowed so that the hen and chicks will have plenty of fresh air. Hens will successfully brood 10 to 15 chickens early in the breeding season, and 18 to 25 in warm weather, depending upon the size of the hen.

The hen should be confined in the coop until the chicks are weaned, while the chicks are allowed free range after they are a few days old. Where hens are allowed free range and have to forage for feed for themselves and chicks they often take them through wet grass, where the chicks may become chilled and die. Then, too, in most broods there are one or two chicks that are weaker than the others, and if the hen is allowed free range the weaker ones often get behind and out of hearing of the mother's cluck and call. In most cases this results in the loss and death of these chicks, due to their becoming chilled. The loss in young chicks due to allowing the hen free range is undoubtedly large.

Chickens frequently have to be caught and put into their coops during sudden storms, as they are apt to huddle in some hole or corner where they get chilled or drowned. They must be kept growing constantly if the best results are to be obtained, as they never entirely recover from checks in their growth even for a short period. Hens should be left with the chicks as long as they will brood them.

FEEDING YOUNG CHICKENS.

Young chickens should be fed from three to five times daily, depending upon one's experience in feeding. Undoubtedly chickens can be grown faster by feeding five times daily than by feeding three times daily, but it should be borne in mind that more harm can be done to the young chickens by overfeeding than by underfeeding, and at no time should they be fed more than enough to satisfy their appetites—and to keep them exercising—except at the evening or last meal, when they should be given all they will eat. Greater care must be exercised not to overfeed young chicks that are confined than those that have free range, as leg weakness is apt to result.

The young chicks may be fed any time after they are 36 to 48 hours old. The first feed may contain hard-boiled eggs, johnnycake (1 dozen infertile eggs to 10 pounds of corn meal; add enough milk to make a pasty mass, and 1 tablespoonful of baking soda), stale bread, pinhead oatmeal, or rolled oats. Dry bread crumbs or rolled oats may be mixed with hard-boiled eggs, making about one-fourth of the mixture eggs. Feed the bread crumbs, rolled oats, or johnnycake mixtures five times daily for the first week, then gradually substitute for one or two feeds of the mixture finely cracked grains of equal parts by weight of cracked wheat, cracked corn, and pinhead oatmeal or hulled

oats, to which about 5 per cent of cracked peas or broken rice and 2 per cent of charcoal, millet, or rape seed may be added. A commercial chick feed may be substituted if desired. The above ration can be fed until the chicks are two weeks old, when they should be placed on grain and a dry or wet mash mixture. Mashies mixed with milk are of considerable value in giving the chickens a good start in life, but the mixtures should be fed in a crumbly mass and not in a sloppy condition.

As soon as the chickens will eat whole wheat, cracked corn, and other grains, the small-sized chick feed can be eliminated. In addition to the above feeds the chickens' growth can be hastened if they are given sour milk, skim milk, or buttermilk to drink. Growing chickens kept on range may be given all their feed in a hopper, using as a grain mixture two parts by weight of cracked corn and one part of wheat, and for a mash mixture any of those given for laying hens. If beef scrap is to be fed, it is advisable to wait until the chicks are 10 days old. Chickens confined to small yards should be supplied with green feed, such as lettuce, sprouted oats, alfalfa, or clover, but the best place to raise chickens successfully is on a good range where no extra green feed is required.

SOME POULTRY HINTS.

Allow the hens free range. Wire in the garden, not the hens.

Stronger fertility is secured from birds on range.

Remove the male birds from the flock as soon as the hatching season is over, so as to produce infertile eggs.

Infertile eggs are produced by hens having no male birds with them.

Infertile eggs keep much better than those that are fertile.

The male bird has no influence on the number of eggs laid.

The hen's greatest profit-producing period is the first and second years.

February and March are the best hatching months. Chicks hatched during these months are freer from sore head than those hatched later.

Do not allow sitting hens to remain in the henhouse. By so doing many eggs are started to incubate, which renders them unfit for use at home or to market.

If possible place the brood coops near the cornfield, which furnishes both shade and fresh ground.

The free use of kerosene or crude petroleum on the roosts, dropping boards, in the cracks, and around the nests will exterminate mites. Whitewash is also good.

Spray the brood coops once a week with some of these solutions and move to fresh ground.

Be sure and feed the table scraps to the fowls. Milk is one of the best feeds for egg production.

For additional information on poultry get in touch with your county agent and State agricultural college.

Write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for Farmers' Bulletins on poultry. They are free for the asking.